The American Union Conference began Wednesday evening after the American Union delegates had spent two days hearing reports from the outgoing officers, electing officers for the 2013-2015 term, and deliberating matters of importance for the Union.

A few weeks before this conference, the Union Committee was challenged to find another location for the meetings when the camp that had been reserved suffered major damage in a wildfire. Accommodations and meeting rooms were found at the Best Western Plus Heritage Inn, Rancho Cucamonga, California; and the conference attendees enjoyed comfortable hotel rooms and catered meals in addition to the wealth of spiritual blessings offered by a full program of meetings.

Elder Tzvetan Petkov opened the conference with a Bible verse that was repeated many times during these very blessed meetings, Romans 8:14: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Quite a large group of believers was present for the first meeting, and Elder Petkov welcomed them all, emphasizing that the purpose of the conference was for everyone to learn, pray, and meditate—to be led by the Spirit. Romans 8 is an important chapter explaining how one receives the Holy Spirit. First, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ; and, second, they walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

The Greek word for “Spirit”—pneuma—implies the power of air, which is often thought of as impersonal. But the Holy Spirit controls and empowers those who welcome Him, which is one of the greatest of all miracles. He does this by living in a person—“Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” Romans 8:9. This gift is referred to in the Scriptures as the baptism of the Spirit and fire. When the disciples received this baptism, they had not overcome all their weaknesses; but they desired to work for the Lord. Thus the Spirit could guide them into conversion. No one should wait for even a second to request this precious Gift, for Jesus said, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” Luke 11:13. The only way to be an overcomer is to be filled with the Spirit, which will also make one a blessing to others.
American Union Newsletter

Brother David Moreno conducted the Music and Praise meeting. The congregational music at this conference was very strong and beautiful. The songs at this meeting included “How Great Thou Art,” “Jerusalén la Hermosa,” “He Hideth My Soul,” “Now I Belong to Jesus,” and “When I Think about Your Magnitude.” At this time and in later meetings, an Adventist brother who was present at this conference enhanced the songs sung by the believers from Riverside as well as others with very beautiful guitar accompaniment.

Thursday, August 15
For the morning worship, titled “Prayer and the Baptism by the Holy Spirit,” Sister Delmy Pleitez read John 16:23, 24—“And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, WHATSOEVER ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” Jesus was the Comforter when He was on earth, and He said He would send another Comforter when He left. It is essential that God’s people receive this Gift, for He alone can change one’s heart and rid it of selfishness. In fact, it is through the baptism of water and the Spirit that a person becomes part of Christ’s body. This is the work of the early rain, without which one cannot even begin to grow. But the promise is that the eager reception of the Holy Spirit will make one strong and ready to receive the latter rain.

After breakfast, Sisters Margie Seely, Sandy Schendel, Anne Petrovich, and Brother Christian Nelson coordinated a children’s and youth conference as Workshop 1 began for the adults, titled “The Importance of the Holy Spirit in the Christian’s Life,” led by Elder Uldarico Alejos. He pointed out that it is a great danger when one’s Christian life remains stagnant. The Holy Spirit is critically important for salvation, and it is an enormous privilege to receive Him. Some questions regarding this were asked: “Who am I?” “Why am I in the world?” “Where am I going?” “What am I doing?” And collectively, “Who are we?” If we are led by the Spirit of God, we are children of God. We are not the same as those who are not led by God.

Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, one is no longer a servant but a son; that is, he is not afraid but confident, for he knows and loves God. God is glorified when the Spirit gives life to each person, and then the church becomes a light and blessing as well. His presence is absolutely necessary for church health.

In Luke 14:31, 32, Jesus spoke about being equipped for war—counting the cost, knowing the odds, and planning for success. How can the church go to war with the enemy if it is unarmed? Everyone needs the weapons of the Spirit. To close this workshop, a prayer was offered by one person for the pastors, and a pastor prayed for the people.

For Workshop 2, Elder Joel Barnedo presented the topic “The Holy Spirit and the Spreading of the Gospel.” He said that the Lord told him, “Joel, I chose you. It is a privilege to serve Me.” Nothing the world offers can compare with this. A comparison was made between Moses’ rod and the talents God has given each person. Think of cooking, playing an instrument, smiling, or talking to people. The question was asked, “Are you holding your talents?” That is, are you using them, or just holding them?

The rod is a symbol of power—support, defense, correction, and help. The letter “J,” with which Jesus’ name begins, is shaped like an upside-down rod, and Jesus is reaching down from heaven to help everyone. “Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” Psalm 23:4. And the Lord calls everyone to be a fisherman, not a hunter—to reflect His love and draw people with happiness. When each one does his part, the church will grow. In conclusion, Elder Barnedo sang “I Wonder, Have I Done My Best for Jesus.”

The next meeting was a question-and-answer session in which Elders Tzvetan Petkov, Henry Dering, and Neptali Acevedo responded to questions submitted by individuals in the
congregation. For example, one question was “When will Jesus come?” The answer was that from Adam to our time, everyone thought Jesus would come in his day. Jesus comes for us when our life ends, and soon He will come to reap the harvest of this world.

Another question was, “Who is the antichrist?” The Scriptures speak of many antichrists, but all who are of Satan have the spirit of antichrist, the spirit of rebellion against Heaven, not the attributes of Christ’s love.

In response to a query concerning the name of the church, it was stated that some people are reformers in name but not really reformers. Reference was made to Isaiah 4:1–“And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by Thy name, to take away our reproach.” This prophecy is for today, when many churches claim to be Christian but want to eat their own bread (doctrines) and wear their own apparel (have their own righteousness, not Christ’s). That is related to the story of the man who entered the wedding feast wearing his own clothes in Matthew 22:11-13. Few seek to understand or obtain the holiness God offers and that is essential for one to be in His presence.

Elder Humberto Ajucum presented Workshop 3, “The Gifts of the Holy Spirit.” Some people say that the Holy Spirit does not exist. If that were the case, what could empower a person to overcome the wicked one and do God’s work? The apostle Paul urged, “As ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.” 1 Corinthians 14:12. Furthermore, “yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” Romans 6:19.

According to 1 Corinthians 12, the various gifts are imparted by the Holy Spirit—those that are natural and those that are acquired. Furthermore, any talent that is not used will ultimately fade away. Everyone has one or more gifts and needs the cooperation of others with gifts; no one can depend on himself. It is very important to identify one’s specific gifts and improve them. The spiritual gifts include prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, managing, and showing mercy and love, while the offices include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. But all the gifts and offices are endued and endowed for the purpose of glorifying the great Giver and will be powerful only when the Holy Spirit is able to use them.

Elder Ciro Arevalo presented Workshop 4, “The Holy Spirit’s Fire.” Acts 2:3, 4 speaks of tongues of fire that rested on the apostles on the day of Pentecost. And the Spirit of prophecy says that everyone has great need of the Holy Spirit and should speak much about Him. Through the holy fire of the Spirit, faults, weaknesses, and mistakes are taken away. Consider some of the scriptural references to fire: The flaming sword at Eden’s gate after sin entered, Moses at the burning bush, the guiding pillar of fire for Israel in the wilderness, the Hebrew youth in King Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace, Elijah taken to heaven in a flaming chariot, and the burning coals cleansing Isaiah’s words.

Fire consumes anything that will burn, and the holy fire described in 1 Corinthians 3:13 will test everyone’s work and character and consume selfishness. In fact, a character transformed by the Holy Spirit is the only thing that a person will take with him to the eternal kingdom. Have we cooperated with the Holy Spirit to remove all contamination of worldliness and selfishness from our characters? One other characteristic of fire is that it provides warmth, removing spiritual barriers. We are by nature cold, and God’s Spirit wants to warm us and thus give warmth to others through us.

Workshop 5 was led by Elder Oscar Valles, titled “Unity in the Spirit.” After handing out pens and writing tablets, Elder Valles divided the congregation into six groups. The apostle Paul counseled in Ephesians 4:3: “Endeavouring to keep the unity of
the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Such unity is priceless; it includes having singleness of purpose and mutual understanding. A nature different from that with which we are born is necessary to have unity based on truth—a cleansed, purified, born-again nature. Then, everyone needs a vision of the divine will at three levels: (1) Individually we need to see the Scriptures as real and believe that the heavenly ideal can be achieved; (2) those in leadership need to see and supervise those under their care so the Saviour’s commission is carried out; (3) Heaven’s provisions for such unity need to be seen and embraced so God can perform His powerful acts.

“Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.” “Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.” 2 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Peter 3:8. The six groups were given the task of discussing what they would do to have unity in the church. One person from each group then presented the ideas that his or her group discussed, which included the following: Have compassion for one another, be humble, be ready to apologize, truly love one another, have Jesus as the Leader, be respectful, pray, practice Christian fundamentals, have unity in adversity, not just unity in diversity, encourage each other to use his or her talents and experience, communicate, and put every talent at God’s disposal.

The evening service, titled “The Early Rain,” was presented by Elder Pablo Hunger. He gave a practical illustration from farming of how critically important the early rain is. It takes experience and the blessings of God for a farmer to receive a good harvest and have food for his family. Rain is a symbol of blessing and treasure. The early rain softens the soil for planting; this is what the early rain at Pentecost did for the Christian church. This corresponds to the apostle Peter’s preaching, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 2:38. The soil of the listeners’ hearts was hard and dry; they were closed to the message of truth. The message of repentance was as rain, preparing the way for the Holy Spirit to work. The question was asked, “How is your heart in relation to your family and others?” It is not soft if you have difficulties with others. The work of the early rain is to empty the heart of every defilement through confession and putting away sin. “Under the influence of the Spirit, words of penitence and confession mingled with songs of praise for sins forgiven.” –Last Day Events, p. 185.

The second purpose of the early rain is to bring about germination and growth. The transformation of character comes from a relationship with God’s word. We cannot do for ourselves what God alone can do for us—changing us into Christ’s likeness. The teachings of Scripture are referred to as rain. If the early rain has not done its work, there will be no life, in which case the latter rain will provide no benefit. Everyone needs to keep receiving the rain, or he will die. There needs to be constant development of Christian virtue, constant advancement, living up to the light one has received, and readily receiving greater light.

Friday, August 16
Sister Ana Santos presented “The Symbols of the Spirit” for the morning worship. It is wonderful to study God’s word daily so the Spirit can bring the heavenly principles to mind when it is time to pass them on to others. Especially those living right before Jesus’ second coming need to be filled with the Holy Spirit so the spiritual mysteries seen in the simple things of life will give power to the thoughts conveyed to all who enter their circle of influence.

Seven prominent symbols for the Holy Spirit show the multitude of blessings He showers upon the world: Fire (refines, purifies, provides warmth and light); wind (gives life, breath, and inspiration); water (sustains life, purifies, refreshes, and cleanses); seal (confirms the faith of Christ in one’s heart); oil (authorizes the performance of every holy service); dove (imparts Jesus’ character of gentleness, meekness, innocence, peace, patience, persuasion, and blessing); wine (nourishes, produces courage, vigor, joy, and inspiration for effective service).

“Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men’s thought.” —Education, p. 17.
Elder Douglas Francis presented Workshop 6, “Preparation for the Latter Rain.” We speak much about the early rain and also about the latter rain. But the time between those two events is now. What does the farmer do in the time between the early rain and the harvest? He has prepared the soil, sown the seed, and accepted the gift of rain. His responsibility now is to remove the weeds, keep the pests away from the crops, and protect the field from marauders. What should be done? “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Peter 5:6-8. Every moment we need to be connected to Heaven, to be humble, to be careful, to be mentally alert, to be vigilant. This includes being clear of mind to defend divine scriptural teachings.

Drought destroys the plants. Similarly, a failure to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance will leave the church weak when temptations come from the world, when unrighteousness is seen in others, or when leaders fail to break up the fallow ground and strengthen the believers. All who carefully watch over God’s heritage of their own souls and those of others will finally receive the blessings of the latter rain and be ready to glorify their Redeemer in the coming trials and also in eternity.

Workshop 7, titled “The Law of the Spirit,” was given by Elder Neptali Acevedo. Natural physical laws are absolute, stable, and applicable everywhere in the universe. They apply whenever conditions are the same. The Bible speaks of another law—the law of sin. Before Christ enters the life, all are “by nature the children of wrath.” Ephesians 2:3. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Romans 3:23; 5:12. “Under his [Satan’s] control, men sin by rule.” –Review and Herald, February 11, 1902.

But when the Holy Spirit is received in one’s mind and heart, the conditions change; Satan’s control is broken, placing the person outside of that evil influence. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:2. The law of the Spirit annuls the law of sin. “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” 2 Corinthians 3:17. “To every one who surrenders fully to God is given the privilege of living without sin, in obedience to the law of heaven.” –Review and Herald, September 27, 1906. “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” 1 John 5:18. “There is nothing in the heart of the man who abides in Christ that is at war with any precept of God's law. Where the Spirit of Christ is in the heart, the character of Christ will be revealed, and there will be manifested gentleness under provocation, and patience under
American Union Newsletter

September 2013

trial.” – Signs of the Times, June 20, 1895. Praise God for the law of the Spirit!

Workshop 8, the final workshop, was titled “Outpouring of the Latter Rain” and was presented by Elder Larry Watts. According to Matthew 5:45, the heavenly Father “maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” This is a law of nature. Does that mean that the Holy Spirit is also poured out on everyone? Some people ask, “What is keeping the latter rain from falling?” “What should we do about the sin problem?” The word “problem” does not exist in Scripture. Why? Because God has already provided the answer. Therefore, the correct question is, “Have we accepted God’s answer?” When we give ourselves to Him, He makes us a solution for problems. Jesus has all power to give to the helpless human agent, and He transforms everyone who gives himself to Him.

The Ten Commandments are ten basic principles of heaven that are revealed in the lives of those who will receive the gift of the latter rain, because they have yielded to the Holy Spirit.

1. Order (this is Heaven’s first law; make God the center, the first)
2. Life (go to work on oneself; sacrifice; one cannot help himself until he helps someone else)
3. Grow or die (if we want something to be different tomorrow, we need to do something different today)
4. Rest and restoration (rest in Christ and trust in Him make it possible for Him to exercise His power)
5. Loyalty/respect (this applies to parents, leaders, the government, and every relationship)
6. Cause and effect (plant good things; don’t plant doubt, or you will reap doubt)
7. Purity and simplicity (keep the mind focused on the things of Philippians 4:8)
8. Quality (if we do not give our very best effort in every situation, we are stealing from God or man)
9. Integrity and truth (relationships and society itself can exist for long only when people are truthful)
10. Encouragement (faith says that everything that happens is allowed of God for His purpose)

Do we want to be ready to receive the latter rain? Then, our task is to yield, follow, and go.

The Sabbath opening service, titled “Transformation in Christ,” was given by Elder Henry Dering. When Nicodemus visited Jesus by night, he saw Him as a rabbi, a miracle worker, but not as the Messiah. Jesus went right to the point by explaining that the Jewish ruler did not need more knowledge; he needed a transformation of mind, heart, and character. It is the same today. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” 1 Corinthians 5:17.

Consider this: We need two births—a natural and a spiritual. If we have one birth only, we will die twice. But if we are born twice, we will die just once! The invitation is for everyone; God has chosen you; He sent His Son to die for you. He wants to transform you so you produce the fruit of the Spirit. The Bible presents people who took advantage of this opportunity to be changed—Zacchaeus, the thief on the cross, Paul, and Mary, for example. In fact, Jesus’ command to Mary, “Go, and sin no more,” is a promise of His desire to live in each person through His Spirit. The born-again experience is the greatest miracle on earth, and it completely changes one’s view of the world and especially of the church. At the end of this service, the congregation sang the theme song printed in the program, “Come, Holy Spirit.”

The last service of the day was presented by Elder Pablo Hunger, who showed slides from numerous countries as he spoke about “Despair and Death—Life and Peace.” He related incidents of war, bombing, riots, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, sickness, suffering, depression, despair, and death. The cries from earth are just like the cries of the disciples to Jesus when they were in the ship on the stormy sea; they called three times and had nearly given up hope. But after Jesus stilled the storm, He asked, “Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?” Mark 4:40.

Many people despair, because they have no hope or faith. They don’t know or trust the Miracle Worker of body, soul, and spirit. Too often we are like the disciples, who were amazed many times at what Jesus did but still didn’t believe Him. Why do we wait so long to call on Him for help? Why do we not rest in His promises constantly, rather than suffering so much by trying to change our own circumstances before calling on Him? “Whether on the land or on the sea, if we have the Saviour in our
hearts, there is no need of fear. Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life, and will deliver us from danger in the way that He knows to be best.” – The Desire of Ages, p. 336. “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” Isaiah 54:10.

Sabbath, August 17
For the Sabbath morning worship service, titled “The Comforter,” Brother Sebastien Guillaume read the precious promise of Jesus, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever.” John 14:15, 16. Jesus knew that many people would go away from Him because of fear. Remember, the disciples had no Bibles (only scrolls) and no church buildings (they only visited synagogues); and they often met outside somewhere. Nevertheless, Jesus said not to despair or be afraid; the Comforter would be with them and give them constant assurance. In fact, the experience on the mount of transfiguration provided them special comfort for then and for the future.

As we are comforted, we need to share the Comforter with others. The Holy Spirit will move His children to speak and act. However, it is important to let go of any heathen treasure to which we may cling, for such things block the Holy Spirit from being able to communicate with us. We should say and do nothing that will cause confusion. Like Jesus, let us be touchable, reachable, open, relaxed, friendly, and ready to say, “I love you!” to our fellow believers and thus make the church a warm, joyful place for everyone!

After the teachers’ meeting, the Sabbath school, and a children’s story about the 5-point sea star, Elder Idel Suárez, Jr., presented the Sabbath service on the conference theme. He mentioned Napoleon Bonaparte, who said there are two forces in the world—the sword and the Spirit. And, he said, the Spirit is always mightier than the sword. The Bible says the Spirit wants to lead, but man’s tendency is to hide (like Adam), hold back (like Lot), run (like Jonah), and get scared (like Peter). All of these people were scared, but God didn’t give up trying to reach them. The psalmist expressed it like this: “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before Thee. Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” Psalm 73:22-24.

There is a very beautiful picture in the creation of Eve. After God created her from Adam’s rib, He led her to the man. Eve was a symbol of the church, which the Spirit takes by the hand and leads to Jesus. We can say that the Holy Spirit is like a heavenly GPS, telling us where to go. And today’s GPS devices are especially nice, because if we take a wrong turn, they simply recalculate the route for us. The Holy Spirit guides man into all truth (John 16:13), and Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” John 14:6.
Martin Luther told about the apostle Paul’s writings concerning slavery and adoption. The Spirit of God comes to a slave and leads him to Jesus; then the Father adopts him. One thus goes from the spirit of slavery to the spirit of adoption. The slaves always lived in fear—of being sold, of being separated from spouse and children, or of being whipped, branded, or killed. Slaves had no inheritance and had just one desire—to be freed.

Harriet Tubman was a former slave who escaped and then helped many escape to the North. It was frightening to try to escape, and this woman found ways to help people overcome their fear. In the Bible, a slave was under the curse, under the law; and in Romans 8:15, right after stating that those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God, the apostle Paul wrote: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” How thankful everyone should be that he or she can be led by the Spirit from the slavery of sin to freedom in Christ through adoption!

Another interesting point is that an adopted son or daughter will be disciplined; a slave is not disciplined—only punished. Discipline means that a parent teaches his child to live the values of the parents—to be the image of and represent them. When we are disciplined by God, we should be eternally grateful. A call was made for all who wished to leave slavery to come forward. Eighteen people answered this call, and prayer was offered for them at the close of this inspiring service.

In the early afternoon, the newly elected officers of the American Union were presented by Elder Larry Watts, representing the General Conference. Everything that is done in an orderly manner will be blessed by God. There are different gifts and administrations, but everyone needs to embrace the principle of Ezekiel 44:23: “And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.” Each person has gifts to use and responsibilities to carry out to the best of his ability. This is not easy, because self has to die for one to be able truly to serve God and His people. All who are willing to serve or not to serve, as God wills, glorify Him. God’s children are all one in Jesus Christ, so let everyone uplift and encourage each other and be united in action and purpose. Following are the officers selected by the delegates to serve for the 2013-2015 term:

President: Tzvetan Petkov
Vice President: Henry Dering
Secretary: Margie Seely
Treasurer: Maggie Troncoso
Missionary/Canvassing Leader: Oscar Valles
Assistants: Joel Barnedo, Henry Dering
Youth Leader: Adin Ajucum
Assistants: Christian Nelson, Angelica Troncoso
Health Leader: Vilma Ajucum
Education Leader: Margie Seely
Assistant: Lisbeth Hunger
Good Samaritan Leader: Verica Dering
Assistant: Ernestine Schendel
Publishing Leader: Barbara Watts
Lead Auditor: Ernestine Schendel, Evelyn Arevalo
Finance Committee: Maggie Troncoso, Art Schendel, Benjamin Alejos
Committee: President, Vice President (currently WF President), Secretary, Treasurer, Northeastern Field President, Southeastern Field President, Puerto Rican Field President

Delegates to the General Conference: Henry Dering, Neptali Acevedo
Alternates: Humberto Ajucum, Ciro Arevalo

After this service, Elder Tzvetan Petkov and Sister Margie Seely presented a plan for the Distance Learning Program being developed by the American Union. Called Orion Christian Academy, the program includes the standard subjects of Math, Reading, Science, History, Bible, and electives. There are 250-300 children in the American Union, and they are in danger of being snared and taken from Christian principles by the public school system, so there is special interest on the part of the American Union to provide an educational alternative for them.

Distance Learning makes it possible for students to be enrolled in Kindergarten through 12th Grade and study through online reading, videos, games, quizzes, tests, and exercises. Their work is corrected
immediately. The curriculum is mastery based; that
is, as soon as a student masters one level of a
particular subject, he or she can go directly on to the
next. This allows a student’s education to proceed at
the pace that is best for him or her. Complaints about
the public school system include the fact that a lot of
time is wasted in nonessential activities. In the
Distance Learning Program, parents have the
opportunity to guide their children in the way that
they should go. Students may enroll as full-time or
part-time students, in just two or three courses, or
even one course. Every child is tested to determine
the level of study for which he or she is ready in each
subject. Report cards and transcripts are issued.

Contact Sister Margie Seely by email at:
margieseely@yahoo.com or call her at 404-673-2980
to obtain more information. In addition to requesting
a Handbook and Application, Sister Seely will
provide an explanation of costs and alternatives. The
American Union is requesting prayer for this
program and encouraging parents to consider
carefully the impact of their decisions concerning
their children’s education.

Brother Christian Nelson opened the Youth
Program by reading the powerful and inspiring
account in Acts 4:32, 33: “And the multitude of them
that believed were of one heart and of one soul:
neither said any of them that ought of the things
which he possessed was his own; but they had all
things common. And with great power gave the
apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus:
and great grace was upon them all.”

A variety of presentations, from music to
experiences to stories, was interspersed with
inspiring quotations concerning victory in Christ
through the power of the Holy Spirit. The first one
was: “Wake up, brethren; for your own souls’ sake,
wake up. Without the grace of Christ you can do
nothing. Work while you can.” –The Watchman, July
17, 1906.

Two young ladies sang “Someone Will Enter the
Pearly Gate.” “To learn of Christ means to receive
His grace, which is His character.” –Christ’s Object
Lessons, p. 271.

Sister Nada Jeremic, from Australia, read the
poem “Alone.” Two young people from Riverside
sang a duet with beautiful guitar accompaniment.
“The grace of Christ awaits your demand.” –

Brother Christian Nelson told about the camping
trip taken by several young people prior to the
conference. Elder Oscar Valles and Sister Marlene
Reid, from Australia, sang a duet, “The Way That He
Loves.” “His Spirit will take control of your heart
and conscience, presiding over your words and

Elder Idel Suárez, Jr., and Sister Evelyn Arevalo
sang a duet, “Lord, You Have Come to the
Lakeshore,” accompanied by guitar. Elder Suárez
explained about the upcoming six-month missionary
training program scheduled to begin at the General
Conference headquarters in Cedartown, Georgia, on
October 9. This is a unique opportunity to study
scriptural and practical missionary subjects in a
concentrated manner in a dedicated setting.

Brother Simon Beaubrun sang Hymn No. 491,
“God of All Power, and Truth, and Grace,” in the
Do-Re-Mi musical language. “The soul that has
Jesus abiding in it will develop into true greatness.
The intelligent soul who has respect unto all of God's
commandments, through the grace of Christ, will say
to the passions of the heart as he points to God's great
moral standard of righteousness, ‘Hitherto shalt thou
come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves
be stayed,’ and the grace of Christ shall be as a wall
of fire round about the soul.” –Medical Ministry, p.
143.

Three delegates, Sister Ana Santos from the
Southeastern Field, Brother Rolando Quezada from
the Northeastern Field, and Brother George Williams
from the Puerto Rican Field sang “My Jesus I Love
Thee,” accompanied by Elder Neptali Acevedo on
the pan flute and Elder Larry Watts on the violin.
“The only power that can create or perpetuate true
peace is the grace of Christ.” –The Desire of Ages, p.
305.

Easley Arevalo and Elder Larry Watts played a
violin duet, “As I Wandered Restless.” “It is through
His grace alone that Satan can be successfully
409.

Sister Sandy Elias, her husband Antonio, her
children, and her mother-in-law sang “I Would Love
to Tell You What I Think of Jesus,” after which
Sister Verica Dering told about George Mueller’s life
of prayer and meditation. God sustained him in
caring for some 2,000 children in the 1800s, even
though he never asked for financial support. He
became a man of the Spirit by becoming a man of the
Word. “In His name, through His grace, man may be
an overcomer, even as Christ was an overcomer. In
Christ divinity and humanity were united, and the
only way in which man may be an overcomer is through becoming a partaker of the divine nature.” – Sons and Daughters of God, p. 24.

Brother Simon Beaubrun and Brother Sebastien Guillaume sang a hymn in French. “It is His grace that gives man power to obey the laws of God.” – The Ministry of Healing, p. 115.

Accompanied by Brother Robert Dela Rosa on guitar, some members of the Vista church and Elder Joel Barnedo sang “When the Roll Is Called up Yonder” as well as a song in the Filipino language about the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. “… The grace of Christ … would have enabled them to subdue their evil impulses…” – The Great Controversy, p. 28.

For the last special, Elder Neptali Acevedo played “The Potter” on a pan pipe from Rumania. God bless all who participated in this outpouring of praise for His glory.

For the Sabbath closing and farewell meeting, Elder Tzvetan Petkov summarized what had been learned in the workshops and services, such as “only you know your heart;” the difference between being a missionary fisherman and being a hunter; how not to be a slave but to be free; how one’s heart is softened; the difference between the early and the latter rains; that one is not alone but has a Comforter; when someone is trying to hide from God, take him to Jesus; if we miss the early rain, the latter rain will be useless and we will miss the harvest. Everyone is here because of the fire of the Spirit, which is also powerful and represented by the wind. Where there seem to be contradictions, earnest study will reveal the truth.

Lives are changed when the Holy Spirit is welcomed into one’s heart and mind. First, he lives for the purpose of doing good to others through the indwelling Christ—even giving someone a cup of cold water. Second, the Holy Spirit leads the individual to faith and repentance, causing him to discern spiritual matters with the eye of faith. And, finally, through the Holy Spirit a person rejoices to practice serving in God’s church.

What is your mission? There is a place for everyone to serve God on earth now. The Holy Spirit is our spiritual GPS—but only if the connection between us and the Spirit is constant.

Gratitude was expressed to all of the organizers, presenters, and participants in this Conference, particularly Elder Oscar Valles, who found the hotel, and Sister Evelyn Arevalo, who made the arrangements for the conference when the reserved camp suffered fire damage. Thanks go to the translators, Sister Maggie Troncoso, Sister Angelica Troncoso, Brother David Moreno, and Brother George Williams. Thank you also to those who contributed generously for the conference offering. May God bless all who love the heavenly kingdom.

Let us pray for the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts and minds into the perfect image of Jesus—for His glory!

– Barbara Watts

If you wish to download pictures taken during the American Union Conference, email a request to info@sd1888.org and provide your email address.